

FLATHEAD COUNTY PLANNING TASK FORCE
Thursday, September 8, 2005
Earl Bennett Building
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

<u>Members Present</u>	<u>Members Absent</u>	<u>Others</u>
Jed Fisher	Gary Hall	Bill Baum
Jeff Harris	Mike Pence	Michael Blend
Dennis Hester	Tom Jentz	Peter Steele
Charlie Johnson	Cris Coughlin	B.J. Grieve
Charles Lapp	Velvet Phillips-Sullivan	Mayre Flowers
Mike Meehan		Chris Ahner
Joe Russell		
Marsha Sheffels		
Jim Patrick		
Bob Horne		
Bill Shaw		
Turner Askew		
Diana Blend		
Kerry Finley		
Jane Leivo		
Karen Reeves		
Richard Surynt		
Myrt Webb		
Charlie Johnson		
Pam Kennedy		

Nix called the meeting to order

Minutes Approval

Blend reported that the public attendance roster is missing and asked that Bill Bohn be added to the minutes.

Marx made a motion to approve the minutes, as amended. Hester seconded the motion. All in favor.

Presentation by Kurt Hafferman, DNRC

Hafferman stated that growth needs to be located where there is water and the Flathead has great groundwater resources. He discussed in detail the different aquifers in the valley, to include the Evergreen Aquifer. Russell asked about the mineral content in aquifers. Hafferman reported that mineral content depends on how long it takes the water to flow into the valley and wells. The longer it takes the more minerals it will pick up along the way. Hafferman stated that the West Valley area has a shallow aquifer

and he is concerned about the growth in this area because of the mining of water could be faster than the recharge of the aquifer.

Hafferman provided diagrams depicting the thickness of shallow alluvium in the Flathead Lake area and ground water elevations. He also provided a handout setting forth the standards for water well construction.

The DNRC is concerned about bad casings on water wells, causing water leakage from the deep aquifers into the shallow aquifers. Hafferman stated that the Board of Water Well Contractors needs to support and set standards for drillers. All well drillers will have to follow these standards.

Russell asked about the concern of contamination from septic systems in the evergreen area. Kirk stated that this isn't a big concern because of the way the water flows. The water will rise up from the aquifer, but won't go down into the deep aquifer. However, if there is a bad casing on the well, there is a strong possibility of contamination going into the well itself.

Nix stated that this group is looking at densities in the evergreen area but there is a concern about contamination from septic systems and pollution in the area due to the shallow table. Hafferman stated that there is more than enough water to satisfy the growth requirements as long as they locate growth where the water is.

Russell didn't feel the water in the evergreen area is suitable for drinking. The deep aquifers have enough sand and gravel above them to protect the water. He doesn't think there is enough protection in the shallow evergreen aquifer. Hafferman stated that the quality could easily be made to be good through recharge. He clarified that the evergreen area is suitable for growth because of the water quantity, but the quality of the water needs to be considered.

Discussion turned to the Kootenai/Salish and Avista claims on water rights in the Flathead/Lake county areas. Hafferman stated that the Kootenai/Salish believe they own all water rights on the reservation lands and the mining rights outside of the reservation. The DNRC believes they might own the surface water, but not the ground water. Surface water rights could become a problem because of this. Hafferman added that surface and ground water can still be appropriated in Western Montana at this time.

The Tribe and Avista will be pushing for complete closure of the basin, which will limit new commercial permits for regional systems. It might end up where only changes of use can be permitted but no new applications will be allowed.

Russell asked why there is such a concern when there is so much water available. Hafferman stated that the concern is about the ground water being over-appropriated and will no longer flow into the lakes, etc.

Hafferman added that while no decisions have been made, they need to consider the possibility of not being able to appropriate more wells or discontinuing ability to exercise water rights. The cities and towns can reserve water rights for anticipation of future growth. The Notice of Completion will be due in 20 years. They will then have to apply for new water rights after that. Discussion was held.

Reeves summarized the presentation by stating that water quantity has been proven in the Flathead; however, they need to consider water quality when locating growth.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Growth and Guidance Committee

Reeves stated that the committee ended up discussing whether or not they can really help with the Growth Policy and how. The moratorium of growth was discussed. The county is facing enormous pressure to approve master plan amendments during the process of developing this policy. She believes a cease and desist would be good for one year until the policy is written.

Nix added that they need more detail on where to cluster growth. The Planning Department doesn't have enough time to put as much detail in the plan as they would like because of the workload in the office. The planning office wants to get a growth policy in effect to make sure neighborhood plans are in conformance with the plan, as well as new proposed neighborhood plans. He thought they might be premature in trying to assist with this process.

The Task Force will end up providing a base line for the growth policy. They are making strides in the committee and need to continue with the vision. The committees need to pursue all objectives while the growth policy is going on so these objectives are available to the planning department after the growth policy has been adopted.

Blend asked Harris if the planning department has been receiving all of the necessary information from the Task Force. She wanted to know that they are providing sufficient information. The committees need to continue gathering information even though they are done with the base line data.

Harris stated that they are analyzing the information as it comes in. The base line information tells them where they are at today. The planning office will not discourage the committees from continuing to look into the future. The policy framework document will be done because of the timeline. This is a big county with a lot of information. There are neighborhoods with unique characteristics and they need to address these neighborhoods individually rather than with a broad brush. There will be follow-up activity and they will need to come up with a detailed plan for these areas and put something together that the neighborhoods will approve. They don't have time to do this in the time frame allowed. They will have to set up the framework for these detailed land use plans, possibly a five-year plan.

Harris added that they still need the information and they will have to create a concept to address those areas that don't have plans. These areas will be large areas but defined by the uniqueness of the area. Harris added that there is a momentum within the committees to continue to carry things into the growth policy. The policy won't be started until the first of the year. They are still working on the issue papers and are continuing to receive public input.

Nix noted that the cities have great detail in their plans and he is concerned about the county plan being too broad. Reeves agreed, stating that the meeting was very good between the planning boards but she wants to make sure they have a policy that has some teeth to it.

Police, Fire, EMS Committee

Meehan reported on the concerns regarding future growth, to include:

- a) response time to subdivisions in remote areas of county
- b) increase in call loads
- c) need for additional manpower
- d) increased load on volunteers
- e) increased load on 911 system
- f) 911 equipment and replacement costs
- g) Response to areas not covered by rural fire district
- h) Overcrowded detention center

Meehan recommended that an assessment and review of the detention center be conducted by the National Institute of Corrections. He is concerned that the number of patrolmen on duty might not be enough to meet the demands of the valley.

Charlie Johnson stated that the Road Department needs to be included in these objectives because they need to be called upon to make sure the roads are in a condition that allows response by emergency services. The Road Department monitors the fire/ems/law calls but they have no night shift. Bad roads slow down response times.

Johnson added that there are a number of private roads throughout the valley. Does the Road Department plow these roads in case of emergency? He feels this needs to be addressed. Meehan agreed.

Patrick stated that the dispatch system is a concern to Kalispell and he believes that GPS location should be done. He is also concerned about dispatching individual equipment to meet the needs of a specific call.

Askew stated that the 911 Board is very aware of Kalispell's concerns. The Long Range Planning Committee is doing a study to determine how to address these issues. However, this study won't be completed prior to the opening of Kalispell's second fire

station. Askew added that the 911 Board is also working toward wireless dispatch. Patrick stated that he wants this concern added as a priority in the Task Force sub-committee concerns.

Task Force Member Comment Period

Kennedy stated that there is a Clean Air Symposium at the Flathead High School tonight at 7:00 p.m.

Kennedy added that the City of Kalispell is sponsoring a fundraiser for Hurricane Katrina victims. This event will be held at the Eagles Club on Sunday from 2:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. All proceeds will go to the Red Cross.

Blend stated that she would like every committee to have regularly scheduled meetings and to notify herself or the County Commissioners Office of the meeting times and places so these meetings can be posted on the agenda.

Public Comment Period

Flowers stated that she appreciates the posting of these meetings so the public can have an opportunity to attend these meetings.

The meeting as adjourned at 6:00 p.m.